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Letters to the Editor

'A response to "S.A. Bolliger, S. Ross, L. Oesterhelweg, M.J. Thali, B.P. Kneubuehl, Are full or empty beer bottles sturdier and does their fracture-threshold suffice to break the human skull?" [J Forensic Leg Med 16 (2009) 138–142]'

The authors provided in their paper interesting experimental data on the breaking energy of full or empty beer bottles. Full bottles broke at 30 J impact energy, empty bottles at 40 J. The conclusion of the authors is that the breaking energies surpass the minimum fracture-threshold of the human neurocranium and therefore beer bottles are capable of breaking human calvaria. In relation to these interesting experimental findings experiences from forensic casework and experimental biomechanical investigations published some years ago shall be recalled.^{1,2} Skull fractures resulting from blows to the head with glass bottles can be considered as rare events. Although in the literature cases of fatal depressed fractures in the skull caused by blows with glass bottles are described they are in the own case material rare events. Skull fractures were observed only in 2 of 10 fatal cases and the cause of death was not related to mechanical damage of bone or brain in any circumstances (e.g. comminuted skull fractures or severe cerebral contusions). Under experimental conditions, no skull fractures could be produced in 20 postmortem experiments with corpses. In a total number of 30 cases (authentic cases plus experimental setting) skull fractures were only present in two cases. These observations and experimental findings may be also of relevance when expert evidence is given at court.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

References

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2. Madea B, Schmidt P, Lignitz E, Padosch S. Skull injuries caused by blows with glass bottles. In: Tsokos M, editor. *Forensic pathology reviews*, vol. 2. Totowa: Humana Press; 2005. p. 27–41.

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Condom-murder?

Dear Editor,

We read with interest the article entitled 'Condom-murder' by Murty¹ in the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*. The article¹ deals with six cases that are dubbed as 'condom-murder'. In the 'discussion' section, Murty¹ has listed the evidence which could potentially be derived from a condom discovered at a crime site. However, Murty¹ has not provided any information regarding the same in the six cases reported by him. Moreover, the circumstances of death as understood by us from the glumly presented case reports appear not to be the same, and therefore, it is unacceptable to club all of them under the inappropriate blanket of 'condom-murder'. In case 1, the presence of an unused condom

in the pocket of the deceased discovered at autopsy is a mere coincidental finding and is of no significance related to the circumstances of the case. The cases 1, 2, 5 and 6 show that adultery as a reason to murder is not uncommon. The preferred contraception was condom in cases of adultery and is a reasonable and logical choice. It is obvious that condoms were recovered at the crime sites and not any other form of contraception. The cases 3 and 4 suggest rape followed by murder. The christening of the six cases¹ as 'condom-murder' is debatable as it is not supported by the data presented and needs further elucidation.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.